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SUBJECT: VP CANDIDATE AND FORMER SENATE PRESIDENT OKADIGBO
DEAD

1. (U) Embassy learned early September 26 that former Senate President and ANPP Vice Presidential candidate Chuba Okadigbo passed away in the early morning hours. No official announcement has been made as of mid-morning September 26.

2. (U) In spite of rumors already beginning to circulate, it appears that he died of natural causes. Okadigbo took part in the massive political rally in Kano on September 23 and is reported to have suffered from exposure to the heat during the event (septel). He traveled from Kano to Abuja with his running mate Muhammadu Buhari in anticipation of attending the electoral tribunal hearing from September 25 (septel) on the ANPP's case against President Obasanjo and the PDP. His doctor advised against exerting himself, however, so he remained at his residence where he later passed away.

3. (U) COMMENT: In Nigeria, everything is assumed to be a conspiracy in the absence of any proof to the contrary. Politically, his death is not significant to Buhari's efforts to force the GON to hold new elections. His body is at the government hospital in Abuja, but the ANPP could try to stage an event similar to the rally prior to the April 2003 elections commemorating the assassination of Marshall Harry, one of Buhari's leading southern Nigeria supporters.
MEECE